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decision to stay out of the Nosenko controversy to the extent possible. Its findings in this perplexing area were summarized in a few carefully worded paragraphs:

The Committee . . . reviewed all available statements and files pertaining to Nosenko. It questioned Nosenko in detail about Oswald, finding significant inconsistencies in statements he had given the FBI, CIA and the Committee. For example, Nosenko told the Committee that the KGB had Oswald under extensive surveillance, including mail interception, wiretap and physical observation. Yet, in 1964, he told the CIA and FBI there had been no such surveillance of Oswald. Similarly, in 1964, Nosenko indicated there had been no psychiatric examinations of Oswald subsequent to his suicide attempt, while in 1978 he detailed for the Committee the reports he had read about psychiatric examinations of Oswald.

The Committee also found that the CIA had literally put Nosenko in solitary confinement from 1964 to 1968. Strangely, while he was interrogated during this period, he was questioned very little about Oswald. The Agency did not seem to realize Nosenko's importance to an investigation of the assassination. While Richard Helms, then the CIA's Deputy Director for Plans, did tell Chief Justice Warren about Nosenko, the Agency's interest in him seemed to be largely limited to its own intelligence-gathering problem: did the KGB send Nosenko to the United States to deceive the CIA on many matters, only one of them perhaps related to the assassination?

In the end, the Committee, too, was unable to resolve the Nosenko matter. The fashion in which Nosenko was treated by the Agency—his interrogation and confinement—virtually ruined him as a valid source of information on the assassination. Nevertheless, the Committee was certain Nosenko lied about Oswald—whether it was to the FBI and CIA in 1964, or to the Committee in 1978, or perhaps to both. The reasons he would lie about Oswald range from the possibility that he merely wanted to exaggerate his own importance to the disinformation hypothesis with its sinister implications.

Lacking sufficient evidence to distinguish among alternatives,* the Committee decided to limit its

* Beyond those reasons for falsification that can be attributed to Nosenko himself, there has been speculation that the Soviet government, while not involved in the assassination, sent Nosenko on a mission to allay American fears. Hence, while his story about no connection between Oswald and the KGB might be false, his claim of no Soviet involvement in the assassination might be truthful.

conclusion to a characterization of Nosenko as an unreliable source of information about the assassination, or, more specifically, as to whether Oswald was ever contacted, or placed under surveillance, by the KGB.

But the Committee also came to firmer conclusions about the KGB. Despite its firm adherence to the view that Oswald was an authentic Marxist, the Committee specifically absolved the Soviet government of any involvement in the assassination. It gave a sweeping acquittal, in the sense that there was no loophole through which a rogue elephant of the KGB might fit. There was no speculation about Kremlin hawks trying to thwart the dovish tendencies of Kennedy and Khrushchev. There was no suggestion of KGB-trained killers acting on their own initiative—outside the restraining influence of the Supreme Soviet's diplomacy.

Essentially, the Committee just regarded such scenarios as unthinkable and came to the commonsense conclusion that it would be sheer insanity in the nuclear age for one superpower to murder the other's head of state. The final report summed up the logic this way:

Its suspicions notwithstanding, the Committee was led to believe, on the basis of the available evidence, that the Soviet government was not involved in the assassination. In the last analysis, the Committee agreed with the testimony of former Secretary of State Dean Rusk [before the Warren Commission]. To wit, there is no evidence that the Soviet government had any interest in removing President Kennedy, nor is there any evidence that it planned to take advantage of the president's death before it happened or attempted to capitalize on it after it occurred. In fact, the reaction of the Soviet government as well as the Soviet people seemed to be one of genuine shock and sincere grief. The Committee believed, therefore, on the basis of the evidence available to it, that the Soviet government was not involved in the assassination.

Or, as the homicide detective might have put it, "No motive."

Chapter 9 THE MOB, THE KENNEDYS, AND OSWALD

Nearly five decades ago, back in the thirties, hoodlums met in Kansas City and New York to impose a certain order on their underworld of lawlessness. In these historic meetings, efforts were made to establish laws for the lawless. By the demarcation of underworld empires, each with its own hierarchy, the era of unorganized gang warfare was brought to an uneasy close. The resulting institution has been neither more nor less effective than the League of Nations or the UN in preventing bloodshed among dissatisfied members. But, like the world bodies, the national crime syndicate provided a modicum of order where utter chaos had

reigned before. A nine-member commission, representing some twenty-four territorial subdivisions across the continental United States, was invested with permanent Security Council powers.

The reality of an organized underworld was popularly accepted, and Hollywood made it larger than life. If official Washington was reluctant to accept the reality of an organized criminal underworld, it nonetheless granted secret recognition to the upstart invisible power. When the Second World War broke out, the secret operatives of U.S. military intelligence and the CIA's predecessor, OSS, approached underworld figure Charles Luciano for a range of missions from keeping Nazi infiltrators off the New York waterfront to Mafia assistance in the Allied invasion of Sicily. Yet others

no mention of KGB suspicion who was U.S. Dept. agent

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in government preferred to turn a blind eye toward organized crime—officially denying its existence and disparaging those who considered it a national problem. J. Edgar Hoover, in particular, wanted everyone to think that crime was under control, while foreign ideologies and domestic subversives constituted the real threat to American life.

Senator Estes Kefauver brought an unromanticized view of the criminal hierarchy to the screen with his televised hearings on organized crime in interstate commerce in 1950–51. The Kefauver Committee's conclusions were blunt and vivid: a nationwide syndicate, the Mafia, provided centralized direction and control of the most lucrative rackets, as well as the narcotics traffic.

In 1957, another Senate committee—this one chaired by Arkansas Democrat John L. McClellan—probed the mob's influence in the labor movement (under the seemingly balanced rubric of investigating "Improper Activities in the Labor or Management Field"). One of the most active probers of the McClellan Committee was the young Massachusetts Democrat John F. Kennedy; his brother Robert served as the committee's counsel. Among their early targets was the Teamsters' Jimmy Hoffa. In the course of the McClellan hearings, Hoffa beat his first Kennedy-sponsored rap: a charge of attempting to bribe committee staff member John Cye Cheasty. But before the year was out, the Teamsters had been expelled from the AFL-CIO. There was pressure on Hoffa from many directions—and the Kennedys would do all they could to keep the heat on the Teamster maverick.

When the Democrats nominated Senator Kennedy for president in 1960, Hoffa threw the support of his union behind the Republican nominee, Vice-President Richard M. Nixon. There are reports that Hoffa's friend, New Orleans mafioso Carlos Marcello, contributed a half million dollars to the campaign—with Hoffa as the bagman. (A Justice Department land fraud indictment against Hoffa was briefly withdrawn that fall, shortly after the reported Marcello donation; when Nixon failed in his bid for the presidency, the indictment was restored.)

With Robert Kennedy at the head of the Justice Department and John Kennedy in the White House, the pursuit of Hoffa, Marcello, and others was qualitatively altered. The Constitution limited the powers of congressional investigations to exposure of problems and remedial legislation. But in the executive branch of government, the Kennedy brothers were for the first time in a position to enforce the law and prosecute the enemies they had already singled out. By all accounts, their war on organized crime was without precedent in U.S. history.

Hoover resisted, but Bobby Kennedy refused to defer to the FBI chieftain, whose entrenched power was also without precedent. The young attorney general initiated a program to coordinate the intelligence-gathering capacities of over two dozen government agencies. The nerve center of the operation was the Organized Crime and Racketeering Section of the Justice Department. Robert Kennedy quadrupled the battery of attorneys working in that section, from fifteen to sixty. Among the young lawyers who joined the war on organized crime was G. Robert Blakey.

The results were dramatic. Justice Department statistics show a tenfold increase in "Days in Field" against organized crime targets—from 660 in 1960 to 6,699 in 1964; there has never subsequently been a comparable effort. Days in court against organized crime rose from 61 in 1960 to 1,364 in 1964; days in grand jury, from 100 in 1960 to a peak of 1,353 in the year of President Kennedy's death. Convictions of racketeers climbed steadily: 96 in 1961, 101 in 1962, 373 in 1963.

Hoffa and Marcello were early targets, and the Kennedys never admitted defeat in the campaigns to prosecute them successfully. Marcello was deported—he refers to it as simply kidnapping—in the spring of 1961; he returned to the United States secretly that June and was in court in litigation fighting renewed deportation efforts the very day that President Kennedy was shot in Dallas. In the summer of 1961, a federal judge ruled that the grand jury which indicted Jimmy Hoffa for land fraud the preceding fall had not been properly empaneled; but on October 11 the Kennedy Justice Department had succeeded in having Hoffa reindicted for misuse of union funds in the same land deal. Seven months later, Hoffa was again indicted—this time for a labor extortion scheme; this case ended in a hung jury in December 1962.

In May 1963 Hoffa was indicted for jury tampering—a more serious offense than the misdemeanor extortion charge on which the jury had been deliberating. But it was this last indictment which would ultimately convict Hoffa. The principal witness against him was a turncoat in his own inner circle—Edward Grady Partin—whose own record with the law was not without its blemishes. Partin became an informer for the Get Hoffa Squad in the fall of 1962. He first came to the government with a report that Hoffa had talked to him that August about assassinating Robert Kennedy. (A month later Marcello is reported to have uttered a Sicilian death threat against JFK.) The drive to get Hoffa was unrelenting; another indictment (in June 1963) charged the Teamster leader and other union officials with defrauding the union's Central States Pension Fund of over \$20 million.

It is well established that Hoffa, his unsavory associates, and the mob in general rejoiced at the thought that President Kennedy's death in November 1963 had ended the war on organized crime—and Justice Department statistics suggest that they were essentially correct in this belief. Hoffa has been quoted as remarking after the president's assassination that Bobby Kennedy, the attorney general, was now just another lawyer. FBI electronic surveillance captured a pithy summary of the mob's relief on December 3, 1963, when hoodlum Charles English delightedly told his boss, Chicago mobster Sam Giancana, "I will tell you something, in another two months from now, the FBI will be like it was five years ago. They won't be around no more. They say the FBI will get it [the investigation of the president's assassination]. They're gonna start running down Fair Play for Cuba, Fair Play for Matsu. They call that more detrimental to the country than us guys."

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2) True enough, the FBI did expend little investigative energy pursuing organized crime leads in the Kennedy assassination. The Warren Commission showed no interest in the subject; and, three years later, Jim Garrison never mentioned the Mafia—despite the fact that his prime suspect, David Ferrie, was working for Marcello at the very moment of the assassination. For the decade that followed, it was left to private citizens to raise the questions about organized crime that should have been properly answered in the official inquiries.

The Select Committee, virtually from its inception, looked seriously at mob links to the assassination. Blakey's enthusiasm for this line of investigation was evident from the start. At the September 1977 critics conference, Blakey suggested the heading "Oswald and Organized Crime" as an item for the agenda. Blakey explained that Oswald could be left out; but he made clear that organized crime itself was the focus he had in mind, with or without obvious links to Dallas.

To some critics, the most plausible organized crime scenario was one in which Oswald had no role except that of patsy—as he himself insisted when he was in police custody following the assassination. In this view, Ruby played a traditional role of underworld silencer—to protect any secrets that Oswald might have revealed about those in a position to set him up. In any event, in all the literature that had appeared over the years the notion of an *Oswald* connection to the underworld was singularly absent.

7 — While the Select Committee certainly investigated organized crime independently of its examination of the events in Dealey Plaza, in the end it did have to pull all the pieces together. In fact, it couldn't even wait until the end to pull them together: in effect, it had to start tidying things up well before all the evidence was in. One can only wonder how everything might have looked if the finding of a second shooter on the grassy knoll had come on the first day of the investigation—instead of in the final hours. The logical possibility of a frame-up exists *only* when there is a conspiracy. The Committee appears to have given too little consideration to this possibility. It did test some of the key elements in the Warren Commission's circumstantial case against Oswald—in particular, the neutron activation analysis of the "magic bullet" and the trajectory plotting. Critics had fully expected that either of these tests, properly performed, would be likely to demolish the single-bullet theory once and for all. When the tests tended instead to confirm it, the Committee felt it had moved significantly closer to establishing Oswald's guilt beyond reasonable doubt.

Thus, in December 1978, the Committee had already convicted Oswald when it came to the belated conclusion that two snipers had fired at the president. Its investigators had discovered provocative information in the area of organized crime—including electronic recordings of explicit mob threats against the Kennedys. But this investigation had largely paralleled the investigation of Oswald. The late finding of conspiracy forced the Committee to make these parallel lines of investigation meet.

In fairness, both investigations did have a legitimate focus in New Orleans. The region's Mafia boss—Carlos Marcello—had an unusual personal animosity toward John and Robert Kennedy; and many of the greatest mysteries surrounding the identity and personality of Lee Harvey Oswald could only be answered in New Orleans. In the chapters that follow, we will address some of these Oswald mysteries. At this point, we will limit our consideration to the problems in the Committee's efforts to build a bridge between Oswald and Marcello, while readily acknowledging that ongoing investigation of many New Orleans leads is undoubtedly advisable.

The Select Committee could not indict anyone, and most of its report was cautiously understated. But the language concerning Carlos Marcello does not quite balance out into ambiguity. Despite all disclaimers and qualifications, the cloud of suspicion is never fully removed. In its strongest form, the accusation appears in the Committee's judgment "that it was possible, based on an analysis of motive, means, and opportunity, that an individual organized crime leader, or a small combination of leaders, might have participated in a conspiracy to assassinate President Kennedy. The Committee's extensive investigation led it to conclude that the most likely family bosses of organized crime to have participated in such a unilateral assassination plan were Carlos Marcello and Santos Trafficante." (Trafficante operates out of Tampa, Florida, and is a close associate of Marcello.) Both Marcello and Trafficante were found to have had "motive, means and opportunity" to have Kennedy killed. But the Committee also noted Marcello's characteristic prudence as a mitigating factor. The final words on Marcello, however, by no means acquit him:

Considering that record of prudence, and in the absence of direct evidence of involvement, it may be said that it is unlikely that Marcello was in fact involved in the assassination of the president. On the basis of the evidence available to it, and in the context of its duty to be cautious in its evaluation of the evidence, there is no other conclusion that the Committee could reach. On the other hand, the evidence that he had the motive and the evidence of links through associates to both Oswald and Ruby, coupled with the failure of the 1963–64 investigation to explore adequately possible conspiratorial activity in the assassination, precluded a judgment by the Committee that Marcello and his associates were not involved [AR 172].

In addition, within a fortnight of the report's release, no longer constrained by his official responsibilities as chief counsel, Blakey was telling *Newsweek*, "I am now firmly of the opinion that the mob did it. It is a historical truth." If the Justice Department fails to pursue the case, Blakey may spell out to the public exactly what he means by this "historical truth." But at face value, he seems to be saying that he has seen enough persuasive evidence to convince a historian—whether or not any mobster is ever tried and convicted by due juridical process. At this juncture, we have no way of evaluating any evidence that may have gone to the

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any Justice Department. The published record—including staff reports as well as the Committee's own report—has clearly omitted certain suggestive material and played down other items which might ultimately be built into a prosecutor's case. But the key point at the moment is that neither Blakey nor the Committee has shown the public a compelling connection between Oswald and the mob.

One risk is that there will be those who feel that a renewed war on organized crime is such a good thing in itself (and perhaps even an appropriate homage to the Kennedy legacy) that the connections between the mob and Oswald are of only secondary importance. Congressman Floyd Fithian, an Indiana Democrat who served on the Select Committee and also holds a Ph.D. in history, has already published an article suggesting that fighting the mob may be more important than finding out who killed the president. Writing in the *Journal of Indiana Law Enforcement*, Fithian concluded (under the provocative heading "Are we willing to pick up a banner which fell 15 years ago in Dallas?"):

If organized crime was involved in the conspiracy to assassinate the president of the United States, then this "private government" may indeed be more successful than we have ever believed in imposing its will on our most cherished public institutions.

But *whether or not* [emphasis added] John Kennedy died as a result of a Mafia-inspired conspiracy, the challenge facing us today remains: to marshal public will behind a national commitment to fight organized crime, and to win that fight!

Regardless of the intrinsic merit of a war on the Mafia, it should certainly not be substituted for a deeper investigation of the Kennedy assassination. No one should get away with murder, and the perpetrators of this crime should be brought to justice if it is humanly possible. But in addition, the investigation of this crime has already illuminated so many murky areas of the contemporary political scene—especially the overlapping worlds of mobsters, spies, and free-lance terrorists—that to narrow and depoliticize the focus of further inquiry would be a disservice to the American people. As assassination critic Carl Oglesby has written, the Select Committee report itself

is a literate, sophisticated, and well-informed representation of that underworld of history in which the spy, the spook, the hood, and the counterspy roam darkly in each other's shadows, a world which polite opinion still likes to forget about. . . . And this may prove the report's most enduring and compelling contribution: less the detailing of the Kennedy assassination than the detailing of the context in which it occurred. The report's readers will come away clear in their minds that when we talk about "the Mob," we are talking about a basic component of the contemporary American political

scene, not a bunch of Pal Joey types running a crap game in the steampipes. . . . Our chronic national refusal to *see* the Marcellos of the world in our political landscape, or to *see and behold* our darling CIA in the hot embrace of Mafia thugs, means simply that we do not understand our history.

The Committee recognized that Oswald was a troublesome fit in the political context of organized crime as they had developed it. In the words of the report,

. . . it is likely that [Oswald's] principal motivation in the assassination was political . . . and generally leftwing . . . [but] the organized crime figures who had the motive and means to murder the president must be generally characterized as right-wing and anti-Castro. Knitting these two contradictory strands together posed a difficult problem. [AR 179].

The problem was not hypothetical at all. The main link between Oswald and Marcello was through David Ferrie, an ardent anti-Castro activist who worked for Marcellos's lawyer in 1963.

The HSC report offers two solutions to this problem. The first is a masterpiece of Hegelian dialectic: The apparently opposite political views of Oswald and Ferrie actually express a transcendental unity, a commonly held, single-minded dedication to politics as such:

The Committee fully recognized that during the course of Oswald's activities in New Orleans, he apparently became involved with certain anti-Castro elements, although such activities on Oswald's part have never been fully explained. Considering the depth of his political commitment, it would not have been uncharacteristic for Oswald to have attempted to infiltrate anti-Castro Cuban organizations. But the significant point is that regardless of his purpose for joining, it is another example of the dominance of political activity in Oswald's life. . . .

In analyzing Oswald's possible political motive, the Committee considered the fact that as one's position in the political spectrum moves far enough to the left or right, what may otherwise be recognized as strikingly dissimilar viewpoints on the spectrum may be viewed as ideologically related [AR 62-3].

The Committee's alternative explanation is that politics just never came up in the conspiratorial association between two political activists with diametrically opposed viewpoints. According to the report, "Oswald's most significant apparent anti-Castro association, that with David Ferrie, might in fact not have been related to the Cuban issue." This explanation is at least a logical possibility; it may not seem plausible, but it is not as illogical as the suggestion that pro-Castro and anti-Castro activists would have joined forces to kill Presi-

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dent Kennedy because of their shared preoccupation with Cuban politics. Oswald and Ferrie might have been homosexual lovers, for example. But as bedfellows without political motives, Oswald and Ferrie seem an unlikely pair for a presidential plot. The notion that what they had in common was an obligation to organized crime is another hypothetical possibility, but it appears to be farfetched.

Moreover, the fact of association between Oswald and Ferrie is almost as tortuous as the logic that purports to explain it. Two staff reports relating to this problem fail to offer convincing evidence. Beyond the general point that Ferrie's anti-Castro connections and involvement with Marcello "might have made him a good candidate to participate in a conspiracy plot" (presumably with or without Oswald), three arguments are advanced to link Ferrie to Oswald.

One is the now-familiar Hegelianism: "Both men had similar, fervent interest in political topics, especially the Cuba question. Although Ferrie stood firmly on the anti-Castro side of the issue and Oswald was involved in pro-Castro activities, this alone would not rule out the possibility of an Oswald-Ferrie association."

A second argument is the claim that Oswald, at the age of sixteen, met Ferrie in the Civil Air Patrol: "Significant to the argument that Oswald and Ferrie were associated in 1963 is evidence of prior association in 1955 when Ferrie was captain of a Civil Air Patrol squadron and Oswald a young cadet. This pupil-teacher relationship could have greatly facilitated their acquaintance and Ferrie's noted ability to influence others could have been used with Oswald." (It had been alleged at the time of the Garrison investigation that Ferrie exercised "hypnotic" powers—sometimes in the homosexual enticement of minors.)

The final link was proximity:

Both men spent considerable time in the same locale: Ferrie frequently visited the office of Guy Banister in the building at 544 Camp Street, Oswald worked only one block away and had used 544 Camp Street as the address of the Fair Play for Cuba Committee. Additionally, the testimony of a number of witnesses from Clinton, La., placing Oswald and Ferrie together in early September 1963, may be credible. Evidence also exists that a Ferrie colleague, Guy Banister, knew Oswald's pro-Castro leafletting [10 AH 132].

The fact that Banister, who knew Ferrie, may have known that Oswald passed out leaflets (something reported on television in New Orleans at the time) hardly merits comment as an Oswald-Ferrie "link." The so-called Clinton witnesses were an integral part of Jim Garrison's fiasco: They not only claimed to have seen Oswald and Ferrie, but to have seen both in the company of Clay Shaw. The language of the staff report, quoted above, turns the problem inside out; their testimony "may be credible," as the staff report says, but it may lack credibility, as the Garrison affair suggests.

(Let us note that we are not even now discussing the leap from "association" to "criminal conspiracy" based on the Clinton witnesses' testimony.) The Select Committee itself called the Clinton witnesses "credible and significant"; its report wrote around the Garrison problem by indicating that the Committee was "inclined to believe" that Oswald had been in Clinton "in the company of David Ferrie, if not Clay Shaw."

In the case of the Camp Street address, many theories have arisen over the years to explain why Oswald would stamp such an address on pro-Castro literature—though the same building had recently served as the local anti-Castro headquarters and at the time of Oswald's activities continued to house the right-wing operations of private detective Guy Banister. One view is that the fake address was there either to tip off the authorities or to deceive them into believing that Oswald's pro-Castro activities were not authentic—in short, that he was really working for Banister or the right-wing Cuban exiles. (Even if the address had been chosen at random, it would hardly help recruit supporters to the Fair Play for Cuba cause.)

In support of the theory that the Camp Street address was Oswald's insurance policy with the authorities is the fact that the FBI had two copies of the pamphlet bearing the stamped address—one presented by Oswald to an FBI agent in an interview following a street altercation and arrest—but failed to investigate whether Oswald's pro-Cuba committee was really operating out of Camp Street offices. The FBI was definitely on the alert regarding activities of the Fair Play for Cuba Committee, and it was diligent in checking out other Oswald leads, such as a post office box address. A second copy of the pamphlet distributed by Oswald with the Camp Street address was obtained from the FBI through the Freedom of Information Act. On the same page as the address is the FBI's file number 105-1095—the local file for anti-Castro activities! (See photo section.)

Regrettably, the Select Committee seems to have ignored the variety of meanings which Oswald's use of the Camp Street address might have; even in the staff reports there is no mention of how the FBI handled—or conspicuously ignored—the matter. Instead, the staff report on Camp Street comes to the unlikely conclusion that "The primary import of the 544 Camp Street address must be analyzed within the context of a Ferrie-Oswald link." Although this statement may have been intended as a means of establishing some distance from some controversial allegations—particularly the dubious testimony of Banister's secretary to the effect that Oswald had visited Banister's office several times—it remains an unhappy formulation. Yet the prose does not stand out in a report that is full of verbal and logical contortions—and ends on an even more dismal note:

While it could not be definitely determined whether Ferrie had any contact with Oswald after Oswald left New Orleans on September 24, 1963, until the day of the assassination only two months later, the possible Oswald-Ferrie relationship is a significant Oswald association [10 AH 132].

In plainer English, the Committee would have found contact between Ferrie and Oswald in the two months before November 22, significant (as a link to Marcello?), but it found no evidence that such a contact

did it investigate the

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had occurred.

Of course, even if Ferrie and Oswald were acquainted and were in contact during the last two months of Oswald's life, there is a long way to go to prove Ferrie's involvement in a conspiracy to assassinate the president; and implicating Marcello is more difficult still. Without Ferrie, the links between Oswald and Marcello are quite indirect. Those cited by the Select Committee include the following points:

- Oswald's uncle, Charles ("Dutz") Murret, was a minor underworld gambling figure. (The report labels Murret Oswald's "surrogate father.")
- An "individual connected to Murret" who arranged Oswald's bail after his arrest for the leafleting altercation in August 1963 was "an associate of two of Marcello's syndicate deputies."
- Oswald's mother was "acquainted with several men associated with lieutenants in the Marcello organization."

While there is little doubt that the mysteries surrounding Oswald in New Orleans make that city a prime target for further investigation now that there is an official finding of a probable conspiracy in the Kennedy assassination, the haunting memory of the Garrison probe a decade ago should remind all concerned of the need to proceed with extreme caution. Justice demands more than a drive to get Marcello—or even an all-out war on the mob. And history's demand for the whole truth requires a continuing examination of this case through a wider window than an ordinary homicide probe necessitates. In the remaining chapters, we will try to open up that wider field of vision.

PART III BEYOND DEALEY PLAZA: THE DIMENSIONS OF THE CASE

Chapter 10

HOW A SUCCESSFUL CONSPIRACY WORKS

The Select Committee and its chief counsel, G. Robert Blakey, ultimately found themselves in the ironic position of declaring officially that the best evidence available indicated a probable conspiracy in the assassination of President Kennedy—while insisting that the conspiracy itself could have been so limited as to have been of little significance. In a sense, this ironic situation resulted from the chronology of the Committee's work: As late as December 13, 1978, a draft of the Committee's official findings stated, "There is insufficient evidence to find that there was a conspiracy to assassinate President Kennedy." The December 13 draft likewise stated the Committee's belief on the basis of available evidence that the Soviet government, the Cuban government, and anti-Castro organizations were "not involved in the assassination of President Kennedy." The only hint of conspiracy then lay in its finding in the area of organized crime, which read:

Organized crime as an institution was not involved in the assassination of President Kennedy. On the basis of the evidence available to it, the Committee is not able to determine if individual members of it were involved in the assassination [AR 502].

In other words, this finding was stronger than most of the other conclusions in absolutely ruling out organized crime "as an institution" (in contrast to the weaker language—"The committee believes . . ."—in the Soviet, Cuban, and anti-Castro cases); but it left open the possibility of "individual members"—rogue elements of the criminal world—being involved.

When the acoustical evidence persuaded the Committee that a second sniper had fired in Dealey Plaza, there were subtle changes in the findings adopted on December 29, in addition to the stark assertion of the Committee's new belief that President Kennedy "was probably assassinated as a result of a conspiracy." The language referring to the Soviet and Cuban governments was unchanged, but the reference to the Cuban exile groups became:

The Committee believes, on the basis of the evidence available to it, that anti-Castro Cuban groups, as groups, were not involved in the assassination of President Kennedy, but the available evidence does not preclude the possibility that individual members may have been involved [AR 1].

The organized crime finding was rewritten along identical lines.

In only sixteen days, much had changed. Deeply held beliefs had altered, yet there was an effort to conserve as much as possible in the Committee's psychological portrait of Oswald, its belief in the essential good faith of other governmental institutions from the Warren Commission to the CIA, and its conclusions about the implausibility of Soviet or Cuban involvement. Interviewed by the Canadian Broadcasting Company in January 1979, Blakey expressed the belief that the conspiracy might simply have consisted of Oswald and one or two like-minded leftist acquaintances. Similarly, in spelling out the limited consequences of its conspiracy finding, the Committee noted in its final report:

In terms of its implications for government and society, an assassination as a consequence of a conspiracy composed solely of Oswald and a small number of persons, possibly only one, and possibly a person akin to Oswald in temperament and ideology, would not have been fundamentally different from an assassination by Oswald alone [AR 98].

A 500-word footnote at that point digresses on the possibility that two left-wing nuts might have passed